

Author's notes:

Abir is pronounced as ah-beer.

عبير is the native spelling and correct pronunciation of Abir in Arabic. It is pronounced similarly to Abir.

My Name Is...

By Abir Dabbour

"Too Egyptian for Canada, too Canadian for Egypt"

This is the sentiment expected of every first-generation immigrant child,
However the reality of my predicament couldn't be any further.

My name is عبير, but it is also Abir.

عبير is the name my mother carefully chose for me.

It means 'fragrance of flowers' in Arabic, it's a beautiful and fitting name for me;
So precious to me that I never take it off from around my neck.

Abir is the name the citizenship office chose for me.

It means an alcoholic drink in English, it's ugly and the butt of every joke;
So worthless to me that I would give fake names.

عبير and Abir were once two different people.

عبير is Egyptian,

She speaks Arabic,

She practices her culture and faith,

As Egyptian in her lifestyle as her cousins back home.

She resides in the home.

Abir is Canadian,

She speaks English without an accent,

She practices her pronunciation,

As Canadian in her demeanor as her friends at school.

She resides outside the home.

عبير loves drawing and painting,

But was firmly told to make it nothing more than a hobby.

Abir is getting a degree in Politics, she was expected to pursue a legal career and make it her whole life.

عبير and Abir were manifestations of trying to meet conflicting needs.

I could switch between them with the same ease I switch languages.

Previously, they existed separately with a stern wall between them.
I wouldn't be Egyptian in public, nor Canadian at home, and it was easy.
However, upon spending many months at home in the interest of health;
There came a time when private and public began to bleed into each other.
What was a clash at first turned to reconciliation.
I wasn't two halves of a person stitched together anymore.
Finally, there came the genesis of a whole person.

A person who has a degree in Politics, and is now pursuing one in Fine Arts.
A person who speaks both Arabic and English.
A person who is Egyptian and Canadian.
A person whose name is **عبير**, but also Abir.